

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07

L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

/065 W

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R 092154Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3234

INFO USMISSION GENEVA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

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EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: CI, PINT

SUBJECT: THE CHURCH, THE ECONOMY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

REF: A. SANTIAGO 3082; B. SANTIAGO 2266

1. SUMMARY. CARDINAL RAUL SILVA CRITICIZES GOC ECONOMIC POLICY AS CHURCH GROWS INCREASINGLY CONCERNED OVER ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES OF LOWER CLASSES. CHURCH REMAINS PUBLICLY SILENT ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE, APPARENTLY REFLECTING CARDINAL'S CONTINUING BELIEF THAT HIS GOOD PERSONAL RELATIONS WITH GOC LEADERS ARE BEST MEANS OF INFLUENCING GOC POLICY. LACK OF PUBLIC STATEMENT ON HUMAN RIGHTS DOES NOT INDICATE SOFTENING OF CHURCH POSITION ON ISSUE. EMBASSY IS AWARE OF KANDELL'S NYTIMES ARTICLE ON CHURCH. END SUMMARY.

2. AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED (REF B), THE CHURCH IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY CONCERNED OVER EFFECTS OF CURRENT ECONOMIC PROBLEMS ON LOWER CLASSES. CARDINAL SILVA GAVE FURTHER INDICATION OF CHURCH CONCERN DURING LABOR DAY (MAY 1) CATHEDRAL ADDRESS (REF A) WHEN HE GENERALLY CRITICIZED CURRENT GOC ECONOMIC POLICY AND CHILEAN ENTREPRENEURS WHO SEEK ONLY PROFIT. SPEAKING OF HUMANITARIAN NEEDS, THE CARDINAL RHETORICALLY

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ASKED HOW MANY TIMES MAN COULD BE PUSHED ASIDE BY MATERIAL DESIRES AND MONEY. SAID THE CHURCH WILL CONTINUE TO TEACH

THAT "THE ECONOMY MUST SERVE MANKIND: THE PRINCIPAL POINT, THE ESSENTIAL PART OF ECONOMIC LIFE CANNOT BE PROFIT, ITS SUPREME LAW CANNOT BE THE FREE COMPETITION OF SUPPLY AND DEMAND."

3. THERE IS GROWING CONCERN AMONG FERVENT HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATES OVER THE RECENT PUBLIC SILENCE OF CHURCH OFFICIALS ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE. THEY FEAR THE CHURCH IS IGNORING THE CONTINUING HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEM AS IT FOCUSES ON THE DIRE ECONOMIC CONDITION OF MANY OF ITS FOLLOWERS. ON THE OTHER HAND, CARDINAL HAS ALSO BEEN CRITICIZED BY PROMINENT "GREMIALISTA" LEON VILARIN APPARENTLY FOR SPEAKING OUT ON GOC ECONOMIC AFFAIRS. VILARIN SAID CHURCH WAS FAST LOSING ITS PRESTIGIOUS POSITION AS RESULT OF CARDINAL'S BEHAVIOR.

4. COMMENT: EMBASSY IS AWARE OF KANDELL'S MAY 5 NYTIMES ARTICLE "CHURCH IN CHILE IS CRITICIZED AS WEAK ON HUMAN RIGHTS". WE VIEW ARTICLE AS ON THE RIGHT TRACK BUT TOO SHARPLY DELINEATED. THOUGH FORMERLY QUITE ARTICULATE ON SUBJECT, CHURCH HAS NOT PUBLICLY SPOKEN TO HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS FOR SEVERAL MONTHS, AND CHILEANS WHO DEPENDED ON CHURCH HIERARCHY TO LEAD OPPOSITION TO GOC POLICY ARE OBVIOUSLY DISAPPOINTED. CARDINAL IS A VERY PRUDENT, POLITICALLY SOPHISTICATED PERSON, HOWEVER, AND APPARENTLY BELIEVES HIS CURRENT POSITION OF MAINTAINING CORDIAL RELATIONS WITH GOC OFFICIALS IS BEST TACTIC TO INFLUENCE GOC POLICY ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE.

5. EMBOFF DISCUSSED KANDELL ARTICLE WITH CHURCH AND COMMITTEE FOR PEACE SOURCES. LATTER AGREED THAT THERE HAS BEEN SOME CONCERN OVER POSSIBLE WEAKENING OF CARDINAL'S RESOLVE ON HUMAN RIGHTS BUT, IN FACT, THERE HAS BEEN NO REAL DECLINE IN HIS INTEREST. ON SPECIFIC ALLEGATION THAT CARDINAL INTENDS TO DISBAND THE COMMITTEE FOR PEACE, CARDINAL'S REPRESENTATIVE TO COMMITTEE SAID THIS WAS SIMPLY NOT TRUE. SOURCE DID SAY CHURCH CONSIDERS COMMITTEE AS TEMPORARY AND THIS MIGHT HAVE BEEN MISINTERPRETED.

6. THE CHURCH IS MAKING PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON CURRENT ECONOMIC SITUATION. CARDINAL'S LABOR DAY REMARKS, ALBEIT PHRASED IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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GENERAL TERMS, WERE CRITICAL OF GOC POLICY AND ATTITUDE OF ENTREPRENEURS. ALTHOUGH WORKERS MAY HAVE BEEN DISAPPOINTED THAT REMARKS WERE NOT MORE POINTED, WE HAVE HEARD THAT SEVERAL LABOR LEADERS HAVE SPOKEN IN CARDINAL'S DEFENSE SINCE VILARIN'S CRITICISM IN LOCAL RADIO INTERVIEW. THIS EXCHANGE HAS NOT BEEN REPORTED IN PRESS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PERSONAL OPINION, ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, HUMAN RIGHTS, CHURCH STATE RELATIONS, RELIGIOUS LEADERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 MAY 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975SANTIA03231
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750164-0377
From: SANTIAGO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750565/aaaachpd.tel
Line Count: 112
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 SANTIAGO 3082, 75 SANTIAGO 2266
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23 JUN 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <03 NOV 2003 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE CHURCH, THE ECONOMY AND HUMAN RIGHTS
TAGS: PINT, ECON, SHUM, CI, (SILVA, CARDINAL RAUL)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006